

AIRLEAP Sessions at the Next Annual Meetings of the Southern Economic Association

November 21-23, 2020, New Orleans, LA

Session 1. Economic Policy Involving Human Health and Behavior

Organizer: Steven Payson, University of Maryland, spayson@umd.edu

Chair: Catherine Lau, Carthage College, Clau@carthage.edu

This AIRLEAP session presents research on economic policy pertaining to human health and behavior. The session's five papers involve principles of integrity and responsible leadership in economics. These papers examine: (1) oral health care, as it relates to Medicaid, and revisions to Medicaid that would ensure equitable access to such care among all individuals regardless of income; (2) The the issue of workplace harassment and bullying, and the institutional policies that experts commonly recommended to prevent it; (3) How bystanders could tolerate certain forms of unethical behavior that take place in their own public or private organizations; (4) The "Medicare-for-All" policy option in the United States, empirically evaluating the relative impacts of the "public option" versus the "single-payer" option; and (5) The growing application of artificial intelligence, big data, and algorithms in healthcare.

1. Adolescent Oral Health: An Intersectionality Approach to Testing Perceived Barriers to Utilization, Molly Jacobs, East Carolina University, jacobsm17@ecu.edu

Discussant: Ewa J. Kleczyk, University of Maine, ewakleczyk16@gmail.com

Despite community water fluoridation and dental sealants, about 21% of adolescents and young adults have untreated dental caries. These conditions are exacerbated by the declining proportion of young adults receiving oral health care. Studies have identified five primary barriers to oral health utilization—income, insurance/Medicaid, fear, health awareness and transportation—but estimates of their relative magnitudes is often confounded by the intersectionality of disadvantage and other social circumstances. Using CART decisions tree models and hurdle models, we identified the systematic process of oral health receipt and evaluated the factors that contribute most to oral health. Results showed that number of local dentists, health literacy, and fear contributed significantly to receipt of care, while insurance status was the primary determinant. This study underscores the importance of Medicaid revision to ensure equitable access to oral health care for those of all income levels.

2. Workplace Bullying: Nature, Consequences, and Recommended Policies, Carol Osler, Brandeis University, cosler@brandeis.edu

Discussant: Jon Murphy, George Mason University, jmurph23@gmu.edu

The behavior of economists towards one another has come into focus recently, and the picture is not entirely rosy. Should harassment and bullying be a source of concern? This work seeks answers from the extensive research on workplace bullying. It synthesizes that literature to identify the nature of workplace bullying; sources of bullying behavior; adverse consequences for targets, witnesses and institutions; and common institutional responses. It reviews cutting-edge research on the efficacy of different coping strategies, the psychology of target reactions, and the psychology of bullies. Finally, it summarizes institutional policies commonly recommended by experts to prevent workplace bullying and to address it when grievances surface.

3. Selective Attention Spans, Christian Roessler, California State University - East Bay, christian.roessler@csueastbay.edu

Discussant: Erwin Dekker, Erasmus University Rotterdam, e.dekker@eshcc.eur.nl

This work considers why observable unethical behavior, such as discrimination, may be tolerated by bystanders in private organizations or public institutions. The key assumption is that ethical choices are not absolutes; they are always justified by what the decision maker knows. When information is privately revealed to us that calls for a costly action—for example, exposing a superior—it may be possible to ignore or hide it. In a game-theoretic model, such selective attention to facts is essential for the stability of a bad regime that rewards compliance with harmful practices like discrimination. Because having limited information can be of value, subcultures emerge that reinforce particular biased perspectives. Ways to overcome these tendencies involve the public verification of facts. This aligns beliefs and therefore creates a consensus regarding what actions are ethical, making it costly to tolerate unethical behavior. The paper discusses how this can be done.

4. "Medicare-for-All": Specification and Welfare Implications, Relative to a State Public Option, Naomi Zewde, City University of New York, naomi.zewde@sph.cuny.edu

Discussant: Carol Osler, Brandeis University, cosler@brandeis.edu

Households have borne increasing financial responsibility for medical spending. Proposals to address coalesce around two directives: establishing a publicly-directed insurance product (“public option”) or financing healthcare through taxes (“single payer”). This paper empirically evaluates the impacts of the public option and single-payer option on consumers’ medical consumption, financial burdens, and exposure to financial risk. It finds that the single payer option reduced healthcare spending across most of the income distribution. Incorporating risk, the single payer option generated larger welfare improvements to lower-income households and individuals with greater healthcare needs, including the near-elderly and chronically ill, due in part to cost-sharing. The tradeoff between a public option with high deductibles versus the single payer option with no deductibles and progressive income-based premiums may swing in favor of the single payer option for most US residents.

5. Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, and Algorithms in Healthcare, Julia Puauschunder, Columbia University, Julia.Puauschunder@columbia.edu

Discussant: Christian Roessler, California State University - East Bay, christian.roessler@csueastbay.edu

The data revolution in healthcare, in terms of screening, monitoring, coordination of aid, and big data analytics, have revolutionized the medical profession. The opportunities of unprecedented access to healthcare, rational precision, and human resemblance will lead to most sophisticated neutral healthcare in the future. Yet, big data driven medicine also bears risks of privacy infringements and ethical concerns of social stratification and discrimination. Today’s genetic human screening, constant big data information amalgamation as well as social credit scores pegged to access to healthcare also create the most pressing legal and ethical challenges of our time. This paper aims at helping a broad spectrum of stakeholders understand the impact of AI, big data, algorithms and health data based on information about key opportunities and risks but also future market challenges and policy developments for orchestrating the concerted pursuit of improving healthcare excellence.

Session 2. Economic Development

Organizer: Steven Payson, University of Maryland, spayson@umd.edu

Chair: Gregory Boadu-Sebbe, Center for Economic Research and Graduate Education-Economic Institute, Charles University in Prague, gboadusebbe@aims.ac.tz

This AIRLEAP session presents new, path-breaking research findings on economic policy pertaining to economic development. The session's four papers involve principles of integrity and responsible leadership in economics and associated professions. The first discusses an eco-agricultural innovation call a circular agriculture model (CAM) which promotes the multi-grade use of products and byproducts. The second examines minorities in Sri Lanka that had been affected war, and asks whether the regional distribution of aid, after the war, took the effects of the war into consideration. The third explores the plausibility of developing countries uniting to devalue their exchange rates, and it explores the case of Gabon as a particular example. The fourth examines the topic of environmental climate justice and how it can be better achieved through new forms of taxation.

1. Cognition of Agriculture Waste and Payments for a Circular Agriculture Model in Central China, Haimanot Atinkut, Huazhong Agricultural University, hey.china@yahoo.com

Discussant: Gregory Boadu-Sebbe, Center for Economic Research and Graduate Education-Economic Institute, Charles University in Prague, gboadusebbe@aims.ac.tz

This study proposes a “circular agriculture model” (CAM) to support an integrated and sustainable rural society, using data from the Chinese province of Hubei. The study examines the return of crop residues to the soil for compost or biogas production, and farmers' willingness to pay (WTP) under a “polluter pays” principle. It finds that education, infrastructure, trust in neighbors, and environmental attitudes, significantly effect on WTP. Moreover, income, recycling behavior, environmental perception, perceived usefulness-easiness, and trust-in-government positively affect WTP, whereas environmental attitude, intention, and selfishness have a negative effect. These results call for the integration and cooperation of private, government, business, R&D and public welfare to value the combined rural traditions, religion, and values of local communities, which are essential for building trust and providing ecological security, and technology spill-over, to improve farmers' livelihoods.

2. The Role of Aid on Peace Building in Post-War Sri Lanka, Narayani Sritharan, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, nsritharan@umass.edu

Discussant: Artan Karini, University of Sheffield, akarini@fulbrightmail.org

The three-decade war in Sri Lanka left the northern and eastern regions severely destroyed, which are populated by marginalized ethnic groups. Aid to those regions was supposed to enable them to rebuild, but the regions remain underdeveloped. This paper addresses the question, “Does regional distribution of aid affect relative post-conflict performance across regions in Sri Lanka?” It tests the following hypotheses through GIS geocoding, mapping, spatial analysis, and econometrics: 1. Tsunami-affected districts received more aid than others; 2. War-affected districts receive more aid than others; and 3. Economically developed districts receive less aid than others. The paper uses AidData on World Bank, Chinese, and the author's collected data on the ADB aid projects, 2002-2015. It finds that donors do not respond to the needs of the recipient country. The maps and the initial analysis show that aid projects are predominantly in southern regions and not in the war-affected districts.

3. The Hypothesis of Fiscal Devaluation in Developing Countries: The Case of Gabon, Medard Mengue Bidzo, Omar Bongo University, menguebidzo@yahoo.fr

Discussant: Catherine Lau, Carthage College, Clau@carthage.edu

In the absence of adjustment by exchange rates, it is suggested that the effects of a devaluation of the exchange rate through taxation be produced. The purpose of our study is thus to examine the plausibility of such an option in developing countries participating in a monetary union. From a normative perspective, we proceed to an empirical highlighting of the mechanism of classic fiscal devaluation, thanks to the estimation of a model with threshold effects on the data of the Gabonese economy. As a result, the option of fiscal devaluation is conceivable for Gabon. But, its effects would be small.

4. Environmental Climate Justice, Julia Puaschunder, Columbia University, Julia.Puaschunder@columbia.edu

This paper proposes a diversified, international taxation scheme in order to finance climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts worldwide. To find a fair and just distribution of the burden of climate change, a taxation mix of (1) consumption tax, (2) progressive tax, and (3) inheritance tax is recommended. A consumption tax can curb harmful emissions and directly nudge behavior towards sustainability. Yet, to place a fair share of the burden of climate change mitigation upon society, these taxes have to be adjusted to the individual disposable income in order to avoid reducing the incomes of low-income households. Retroactive taxation of past wealth accumulation at the expense of environmental damage can be enacted through an inheritance tax of the corporate sector. Industries should be taxed, when a merger or acquisition or a board member change occurs, in order to reap benefits from past wealth accumulation that potentially caused carbon emissions.